

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY RANGOON

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 064556

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SNAR, BM

SUBJECT: SHAN STATE ARMY NARCOTIC PROPOSAL

REF: STATE 40599

BANGKOK PASS AMBASSADOR VANCE

1. BEGIN L.O.U.: DEPARTMENT OFFICERS MET MARCH 19 WITH CONGRESSMEN WOLFF, GUYER, BURKE, AND YATRON IN WOLFF'S OFFICE. THE CONGRESSMEN WERE TOLD THAT WE HAD GIVEN THE SHAN STATE ARMY PROPOSAL CAREFUL CONSIDERATION AND AGREED THAT BY NO MEANS SHOULD IT BE DISMISSED OUT OF HAND.

2. HOWEVER, THE CONGRESSMEN WERE TOLD THAT THERE WERE SERIOUS PROBLEMS WITH THE PROPOSAL. WE POINTED OUT THAT IT WOULD INVOLVE NEGOTIATING WITH, SUPPORTING, AND ULTIMATELY ARMING AN INSURGENT GROUP FIGHTING THE BURMESE GOVERNMENT, A GOVERNMENT WITH WHICH WE HAD FRIENDLY RELATIONS. WE ALSO POINTED OUT THAT THE SHAN STATE ARMY AND ITS ASSOCIATES WERE ONE OF THE WEAKEST INSURGENT
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GROUPS WITH LITTLE CONTROL OR INFLUENCE OVER MOST OF THE

OPIUM GROWERS AND THEIR TERRITORY. THE GOVERNMENT OF BURMA AND ITS ARMY WERE PERHAPS THE STRONGEST FORCE IN THESE AREAS, THOUGH EVEN THEY EXERCISED ONLY INTERMITTENT CONTROL. LASTLY, WE POINTED OUT THAT PREEMPTIVE BUYING WITHOUT SOME ASSURANCE THAT THE GROWERS WOULD TURN TO SOME OTHER LIVELI-

HOOD COULD ULTIMATELY RESULT IN INCREASED OPIUM PRODUCTION NOT ONLY IN BURMA BUT ALSO ELSEWHERE.

3. THE DISCUSSION ACCOMPANYING AND FOLLOWING THIS PRESENTATION WAS DISJOINTED, BUT IT WAS EVIDENT THAT THE CONGRESSMEN FELT THAT THE DEPARTMENT WAS NOT PLACING ENOUGH EMPHASIS ON THE DRUG PROBLEM, THAT THE PROGRAMS WE WERE PURSUING WITH THE BURMESE GOVERNMENT WOULD PROBABLY NOT BE PARTICULARLY SUCCESSFUL, AND THAT THE SSA PROPOSAL SHOULD BE FURTHER EXPLORED TO SEE IF SOMETHING CONSTRUCTIVE MIGHT COME OF IT.

4. WE STRESSED THAT THE DEPARTMENT DID IN FACT PLACE A HIGH PRIORITY ON THE DRUG PROBLEM. WE MADE NO CLAIMS OF INFALLIBILITY FOR OUR BURMESE PROGRAMS, BUT WE EMPHASIZED THAT WE SINCERELY BELIEVED THAT THEY ALLIED US WITH THE STRONGEST FORCE IN THE AREA AND HELD OUT A BETTER CHANCE OF SUCCESS THAN ANY OTHER POSSIBLE APPROACH. AS FAR AS THE SSA PROPOSAL WAS CONCERNED, WE SAID THAT IF A PROJECT COULD BE DEVELOPED WHICH HAD THE SUPPORT AND COOPERATION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF BURMA, WHICH HAD THE SUPPORT AND COOPERATION OF SOME ORGANIZATION WHICH COULD CONTROL THE OPIUM GROWERS AND THEIR TERRITORY, AND WHICH WOULD INVOLVE THE REDUCTION OR HOPEFULLY THE ELIMINATION OF OPIUM PRODUCTION BY PERHAPS SHIFTING OPIUM GROWERS TO SOME OTHER MEANS OF LIVELIHOOD, THEN WE WOULD SUPPORT SUCH A PROGRAM AND DO WHATEVER WE COULD TO MAKE IT A SUCCESS.

5. SINCE CONGRESSMAN WOLFF HAD ALREADY SURFACED THE SSA PROPOSAL ON THE MARCH 16 "SIXTY MINUTES" TELEVISION PROGRAM, WE TOLD HIM WE WERE GOING TO INSTRUCT EMBASSY RANGOON TO INFORM THE BURMESE GOVERNMENT. WOLFF AGREED TO THIS MOVE. YOU SHOULD MAKE THIS APPROACH AS SOON AS CONFIDENTIAL

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POSSIBLE, TELLING THE BURMESE HOW THE SSA PROPOSAL CAME TO OUR ATTENTION, POINTING OUT TO THEM THAT IN ITS PRESENT FORM WE HAVE NO ILLUSIONS AS TO ITS ACCEPTABILITY, BUT EMPHASIZING THAT IF IT COULD IN SOME WAY BE ALTERED TO MEET THE POINTS SET FORTH IN PARAGRAPH FOUR ABOVE, WE WOULD WANT TO WORK WITH THE BURMESE, EITHER BILATERALLY OR PERHAPS THROUGH THE U.N., TO MAKE SUCH AN EFFORT A SUCCESS. WE WILL ALSO APPROACH BURMESE EMBASSY HERE.

6. IN YOUR APPROACH YOU SHOULD NOTE IN PARTICULAR THAT WE DO NOT RPT NOT INTEND TO SUPPORT UNDER ANY RATIONALE ANY FORM OF REBELLION IN BURMA OR TO INTERVENE IN ANY WAY IN BURMA'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS. WE DO NOT INTEND TO ENTER INTO ANY BUYING PROGRAM OR OTHER PROJECTS INVOLVING BURMESE DISSIDENT GROUPS THAT WOULD NOT HAVE CONCURRENCE OF THE

BURMESE GOVERNMENT, AND WE WOULD CONSULT WITH THE GUB ON ANY SUCH PROGRAMS. ALTHOUGH WE BELIEVE THE CHANCES ARE REMOTE THAT AN ACCEPTABLE NARCOTICS PROGRAM MIGHT EMANATE FROM ANY DISSIDENT GROUP, WE HAVE TOLD CONGRESSMAN WOLFF THAT WE REMAIN OPEN TO EXAMINING ANY PROPOSALS FOR NARCOTICS CONTROL WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT IF THEY INVOLVE BURMESE DISSIDENT GROUPS, THEY WOULD HAVE TO RECEIVE BURMESE GOVERNMENT CONCURRENCE. YOU MAY WISH TO NOTE THE POINT MADE IN RANGOON 329 THAT THERE MIGHT BE A SLIM HOPE THAT SOME SUCH PROPOSAL MIGHT LEAD TO AN ACCOMMODATION BETWEEN THE GUB AND DISSIDENT GROUPS ACCEPTABLE TO THE GUB.

7. CONGRESSMAN WOLFF SAID AT THE END OF THE MEETING THAT HE WOULD PLAN TO HOLD FORMAL HEARINGS ON THE SSA PROPOSAL AND ON THE ENTIRE INTERNATIONAL DRUG CONTROL EFFORT. HE INDICATED THAT HE WAS STILL CONCERNED OVER THE FACT THAT THERE WAS NO DEA AGENT IN RANGOON. WHEN WE SAID THAT THE BURMESE GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT ACCEPT SUCH AN AGENT, HE ASKED WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME WE HAD ASKED THEM. WE SAID THERE HAD BEEN NO RECENT APPROACH AND HE INDICATED HE WOULD RAISE THIS SUBJECT IN THE FORMAL HEARINGS. END L.O.U.

8. BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL: ACCORDINGLY, WE WOULD LIKE YOUR CONFIDENTIAL

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VIEWS SOONEST AS TO THE POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES OF AN APPROACH TO THE BURMESE ON THE POSSIBILITY OF ASSIGNING A DEA AGENT TO EMBASSY RANGOON. INGERSOLL

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